Philosophical Perspective of the Tribal Culture and Religion: A Study of Undivided Midnapore, West Bengal in the 21st Century

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Introduction - Man has taken the title of the best creature in the world by using his intellect. People are constantly presenting their superiority through cultural elements such as customs, rituals, philosophy, religion, literature, language, art, etc. Every human being is a social being; they are governed by any social group. Different social groups have emerged in different cultures. Although there are some similarities between each group, there are also differences between them. And this is where the conflict arises. Not only is there a rivalry between the two ethnic groups on the basis of cultural predominance, but in the fascination of the influential ethnic group, some leave their ethnic group and adopt the so-called advanced ethnic group in the society. They leave their ethnic group in the hope of gaining social benefits and moving on to higher seats. M. N. Srinivas has termed this as 'Sanskritization'.

M. N. Srinivas first coined the term 'Sanskritization' in 1952 in his book 'Religion and Society among the Congress of Southern India'. Srinivas says about Sanskritization - *Sanskritization has been a major process of cultural change in Indian history, and it has occurred in every part of the Indian subcontinent. It may have been more active at some periods than at others, and some parts of India is more Sanskritized than other, but there is no doubt that the process has been universal*.[1] He further said that *Sanskritization is the process by which a 'low` Hindu caste or tribal or other groups, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently,' twice-born 'caste.*[2] It is said that Sanskritization is not limited to the pure Hindu nation; this process can also be observed among the tribal groups.

As a result of this 'Sanskritization', a tribe changed into a nation and then they claimed to be Hindus.[3] However, not only the Hindus but also the so-called civilized nations try to improve their upper-caste by following their various scriptural rites, rules of life, way of life, etc. Such incidents are often seen in today's society. Such a picture emerges among all the tribes that can be observed in West Bengal. In Bengal especially in undivided Midnapore, the tribes are called 'Adivasi'. Although a semantic difference can be noticed between these two words; there are also considerable differences of opinion on this.

Having different cultures, there are a number of tribes in West Bengal. Here we can see about 40 tribes [4]. People of different cultures live here. But on the whole, the customs are almost the same among all the tribes. As they believe in omnipotence, because of primitive belief, wild animals or trees, even hills, mountains, rivers, air, etc., have retained the primordial relationship with inanimate objects.

Problems - The older generation of tribes was truthful, religious and emotional in nature. But the integration of the tribal younger generation with non-tribes has changed their character and psychological thinking. some primitive thoughts have been carried in parallel through their culture. As a group of tribes, they continually try to preserve their own basic culture. On the other hand, another group changes their culture to increase their social status. The reason for their Sanskritization is their desire for upward mobility in education, economic advancement, political empowerment, leadership, and higher stratification. Most of the tribal communities in West Bengal claim to belong to Hinduism. Again many of them are converting and becoming a part of the so-called civilized society.

In other words, it can be said that not only Midnapore or West Bengal but the entire world is undergoing the transition of Sanskritization or cultural aggression. Here the main aim is to create equality among all. The so-called civilized people think that their culture is better than other nations. Those nations have tried to establish cultural unity around the world by displacing other cultures in the world. Their efforts have led to a crisis in the existence of indigenous cultures around the world. Many feel that the unity of this culture around the world needs to be established; otherwise, the equal progress of all people will be hampered. On the other hand, according to another group of thinkers, the extinction of indigenous culture will lead to an unintended crisis in the world of culture. This is because the loss of cultural diversity will destroy the cultural environment in which indigenous people have lived for centuries and at the same time the uniqueness of their traditional existence has been disrupted.

Preliminary Review of Literature - The following is a summary of some books I have read to gain prior experience on the subject before choosing the subject of the above study:

- First of all, M.N Srinivas's book *'Social Change in Modern India*' (translated by Himanshu Ghosh); where detailed information about 'Sanskritization' is given. The reasons for Sanskritization are also well explained in this book.
- Anadikumar Mohapatra's book '*Biṣaẏa Samājatatba*' also gives an outline of 'Sanskritization'.
- S. C. Dubey's book *'Indian Society'* also introduces the rituals of many Indian tribal groups.
- Various cultural information of the tribe has been collected from Salek Khokon's *'Adivasi Biyakatha'* and *'Adivasi Purana'*.
- Ananda Gopal Gupta's essay titled *'Dalit-Ādibāsī-Saṅkhyālaghu: Sāmagrik Ālōcanā'* (edited by Sujit Sen in '*Dalit-Ādibāsī-Saṅkhyālaghu: Abadaman Ō Uttaraṇ*') reveals that Indian tribes have become a scheduled tribe. And in the same book, Subodh Ghosh, in his article titled '*Bhāratīẏa Ādibāsī*', reveals the story of exploitation and deprivation of the indigenous people by various upper castes at different times.
- In the book No. 1 and 2 titled '*Jaṅgalamahal Samāja, Sanskṛti Ō Sāhitya'* edited by Yasin Khan, various aspects of the life philosophy of the indigenous people of Bengal have come to light.
- In his book '*Dharmadarshan*', Pramodbandhu Sengupta, while talking about the origin and development of religion, has mentioned many virtues or good aspects with various defects of tribal religion; we should give importance to this.
- Above all, Parimal Hembrum's '*Sāntāl Sāhityēr Itihās'* provides an overview of the origin of the Santal language, the history of the origin of the script and various cultural activities.

The point that emerges from that discussion is that various discussions have already taken place on the culture and literature of the tribes; which deserves praise. However, although the socio-cultural development of the Tribes was widely discussed, no discussion was held on the various philosophical foundations behind the change in their culture. The research work will move forward with the issue of which is acceptable in terms of ethics - Sanskritization or Aboriginalization.

Hypothesis –

- Philosophical Analysis of the Culture of the tribes of Undivided Midnapore.
- To determine the importance of the primitive culture of the tribes.
- To distinguish Aboriginalization from Sanskritization.
- To explore the way of the progress of the society by keeping the primitive culture alive.
- Discuss the nature of tribal philosophy.

Objectives - Some of the objectives behind my research on this subject are -

- To determine the philosophical aspects of Sanskritization.
- Highlighting the fertile aspects of indigenous culture.
- Identifying the root causes of Sanskritization. In other words, critically analyze the problems of the tribes in the present society.
- Highlighting how acceptable the cultural aspects of the tribes are in today's society.
- Despite the influence of Sanskritization, the relevance of emphasizing one's own primitive culture.
- Above all, to determine the falsity of the artificial view of civilized and uncivilized society.

Research Questions - some questions are arises from that discussion, that-

- What is the philosophical aspect of Sanskritization?
- Which idea is justifiable - Should the issue of changing the culture of indigenous people be accepted? Or should Aboriginal Culture be kept completely unchanged?
- Is Indigenous Sanskritization a blessing or curse?

With this in mind, philosophical discussions about our indigenous culture and civilization will move forward.

Sources and Methodology – To fulfill the stated objective both primary and secondary sources will be considered. As-

Primary Sources - Most of the time I will focus on primary sources to complete this research work. In that case, I will follow the Ethnographic method. "Ethnographic methods are a research approach where you look at people in their cultural setting, with the goal of producing a narrative account of that particular culture, against a theoretical backdrop."[5] At the same time information will be collected through interviews and questionnaires.

Secondary Sources - secondary sources will be books, articles, bulletins, magazines, journals, web searches, censuses etc. Research work will be carried out through critical analysis of these sources.

Research Tools – Computer, Books, Chart

Significance of the proposed work – Emphasis on tribal philosophy along with the constructive analysis of the tribal culture and religion.

Limitations –

- The area of research is undivided Midnapore.
- There may be differences of opinion when it comes to receiving information through interviews. Or there may be ambiguity in the expression
- Language problems
- Lack of time

Future Work – Through this research, the tribes, especially the tribes of Medinipur, will be inspired to hold their own primitive culture more firmly. Along with the primitive culture, they will move forward on the path of progress of the society.

Chapterization –

- ***Introduction***

Although the words 'Adivasi' and ‘Tribe' are now used interchangeably, there are some differences between them. However, these two things are seen as one, as the characteristic of the one is reflected in the other. The word ‘Adivasi’ is new. The term ‘Adivasi’ was first used by popular Indian social worker Thakkar Bapa. After independence, the term 'Scheduled Tribes' was used for tribes in the Indian Constitution.

Chapter 1. The diversity of life of the Adivasi of Midnapore, West Bengal

Most of the present undivided Midnapore belongs to the Jangalmahal region. Especially West Midnapore and Jhargram districts - these areas are called Jangalmahal (including Purulia, Bankura district) as they are densely populated and inhabited by tribes. The major indigenous groups are Santal, Bhumij, Munda, Ho, Lodha, Shabar, Bora, Mahali and Kurmi, (they are now listed as a backward class as lower Hindus). They express their emotions through dance and song. Their social life is very diverse.

Chapter 2. Philosophical perspective of tribal culture & Religion

The main theme of this chapter is the philosophical analysis of tribal culture. In addition to the moral and religious perspectives, culture will be discussed from a phenomenological perspective. The tribes are worshipers of nature. They also believe in a supernatural entity. They believe in animism. Their culture is associated with the concepts of magic, mana, Supreme Being of spirit, omen, etc. To get a clear idea of tribal culture through philosophical research, we need to analyze the special elements of tribal culture In addition to the 9 Indian philosophical Schools we find a distinct philosophical thought of the Indian tribes.

Chapter 3. The social position of the tribes in today's society

Despite various adversities, the tribes are struggling for their existence. Their folklore has reached the court of the world today. Their traditions and ideologies are being expressed through literature and culture. At present many of the tribes have taken a special pioneering role in education. They have not only left their culture as oral literature, but also written it down beautifully. They (Santals) have made their own script ‘Alchiki’. At present, the popularity of Alchiki language has increased a lot. They have established themselves in the field of higher education. Due to their indomitable efforts

and talents, they have achieved success in various administrative activities, business and trade.

Chapter 4. The philosophical basis of adoption - Sanskritization or Aboriginal culture.

Sanskritization and aboriginalization - these two concepts are contradictory. As a result of Sanskritization, the vertical movement of tribes can be noticed. At present the influence of Sanskritization can be seen among the tribes of India. The special role behind this change is the British regime. There are many tribes of Midnapore who identify themselves as Hindus; again, many have converted to other religions. However, there are still some people who follow their primitive culture, their original religion 'Sari Dharam'. This is how we find the identity of two opposite ideologies in the tribal society.

Chapter 5. Impact of Sanskritization on tribes and their future

Sanskritization is undoubtedly a kind of social change process but it cannot be said that it is leading to our overall improvement or progress. It is often seen that despite the development of the social system, the values are reduced and gradually racial hatred also arose. Therefore, as a result of Sanskritization, the tribes are being affected in bringing about social change.

- ***Conclusion***

If the present tribal youth is influenced by modernization and Sanskritization and forgets their own unadulterated culture, then the day will come when no trace of tribal culture will be found in the world. Therefore, the tribal youth and the future tribal society should take the responsibility for preserving their culture. Along with modernization, they have to follow the path without forgetting their own culture. Otherwise, the future of tribal literature, culture and tribal society will sink into the abyss.

The tribes have preserved their culture through various rituals. There has a touch of originality in their culture, which is rare in other religions. Nevertheless, they remain untouchable and neglected in society today. But if we deeply review their culture, such attitudes toward them will be mostly reduced. On the other hand, as a result of Sanskritization, the originality of their culture is being lost and an unexpected crisis is being created in the cultural world. If it continues, their primitive culture will disappear as a result of that mixed culture.

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